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December 13, 1978

Dear Mr. Frenzel:

Thank you for your letter of December 1, 1978, in which you request information about the U.S. response to the Guyana tragedy. As you know, the United States Government continues to be involved in this tragic episode and is investigating various aspects of the situation. Nevertheless, I wanted to give you an early response to the questions you have raised concerning this unprecedented matter.

On Sunday, November 19, it had become clear that the United States Government was facing a major crisis in Guyana. An American Congressman and other Americans in his party had been killed. A settlement believed to include over 1,000 Americans was involved, and its situation was uncertain. It was apparent that the Government of Guyana required assistance in handling a major emergency created by the presence of Americans within its borders.

The President, acting under his constitutional authority as Chief Executive and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, ordered the departments of our government to take action to deal with this emergency. The operational decisions within the U.S. Government in this unique situation were made by the Secretary of State in conjunction with some of his Cabinet colleagues.

Under the President's Executive authorities, medical evacuation for injured Americans was immediately ordered, and the United States Government offered assistance to the Government of Guyana to prevent further loss of life. As events progressed, it became clear that there were large numbers of Americans dead. For a time, it was believed that there were survivors in the jungle; and the United States adjusted and increased its assistance to help the search by Guyana police and military. Finally, when the full scope of the tragedy of Jonestown was clear, our Government was requested by the Government of Guyana to remove the bodies. This operation was considered essential in handling the emergency situation which existed in Guyana. DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY _____ DATE _____

RDS☐ or XDS☐ EXT. DATE _____

TC AUTH. _____ REASON(S) _____

EXEMPT IN FULL FOREIGN ☐

SEGREGATABLE ☐

RELEASE DENIED ☐

FL OF 501 EXEMPTIONS _____

The Honorable
Bill Frenzel
House of Representatives

The Justice Department is fully exploring possible legal remedies which can be used to recover the cost the U.S. Government has incurred in removing and processing the bodies of Americans from Guyana. Now that the emergency is substantially over, the Office of Management and Budget and other agencies are reviewing the various operations to determine the exact cost to the United States Government. Although the costs to the United States Government of an effort of this magnitude obviously are considerable, they are substantially less than the $8 million figure used in some press reports. Please be assured that we will report fully to appropriate congressional committees on these aspects of the operation upon completion of our review. Meanwhile, the Justice Department will make all efforts to recover the costs to the U.S. Government.

If you have any further questions, you may wish to contact Deputy Assistant Secretary John Bushnell. His telephone is 632-8562.

Sincerely,

OB/GW

Douglas J. Bennet, Jr.
Assistant Secretary
for Congressional Relations

ARA/PPC:JSchreiber:mbb #0179-2495

Clearances: Inter-Agency
ARA:GLister
ARA:JBushnell
H:ENef
EN/GW

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December 1, 1978

67 ACTION is assigned to ARA

Mr. Douglas J. Bennet, Jr.
Assistant Secretary for
Congressional Relations
Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Bennet:

I am writing to you concerning the tragic incident in Guyana. It is my understanding that the Government of Guyana would not allow the remains to be buried in their country, which resulted in the emergent airlift.

I received numerous calls and letters from my constituents concerning the use of the taxpayers money for the airlift and temporary welfare for the survivors. I would like to know if the People's Temple is responsible in anyway for the financing of this operation. If this is an option, what procedure guides the Government to file a claim with the Temple to recover our costs. Also, are the welfare funds available to the survivors within welfare regulation or is this an additional cost to be absorbed by the taxpayer.

It is my understanding that families will be notified as the remains are identified and that they are responsible for the transportation cost of the deceased within the US. But, we must assume that may families cannot afford the financial burden or that many of the deceased will not be claimed or identified. I would like to know what will occur under those circumstances.

Thank you for your attention in this matter. Also, at this time I would like to compliment the State Department for the efficient handling of this situation.

Yours very truly,

Bill Frenzel

Bill Frenzel
Member of Congress

BF:mk

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